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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 002713

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: KARZAI'S RESPONSE TO CIVILIAN CASUALTIES RENEWS  
TENSIONS

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) An airstrike in Kunduz province provoked a new round of criticism from President Karzai against international forces. Stating that he was "deeply saddened" by the event and that "targeting civilian men and women is not acceptable," President Karzai's comments were the latest in a series of condemnations of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) bombings he has issued over the past months. The attack, which the governor of Kunduz claimed has killed ninety people, was a targeted bombing aimed at Taliban insurgents who had hijacked two oil tankers. President Karzai called for a full and complete investigation into the incident and has dispatched a team to the site.

¶2. (C) After similar attacks in the past, President Karzai has issued strong statements blasting ISAF for killing innocent civilians. While his comments on the incident in Kunduz, in a slight departure from previous statements, did not mention international forces by name, the implication was that ISAF continues to target civilians in their operations in Afghanistan. ISAF immediately sent investigators to Kunduz, but President Karzai called for his own investigation the day after the event and there appears to be no communication or coordination between his team and the ISAF team. Similarly, our advisor to the Government Media and Information Center (GMIC) reports that there was no message coordination between ISAF and the GMIC before the two bodies issued their statements on the event.

¶3. (C) Comment: This incident comes at a sensitive time for relations between the Karzai administration and the international community due to the lack of resolution on the election results and questions about the possibility of a second round of voting. As the ISAF and Afghan investigations of the event go forward, this incident could become a rallying point for Afghans to step up criticism of the international presence.

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